

Construction of Railway Line

968. SHRI PRABHU DAYAL KATHERIA : Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government had conducted a survey in 1990-91 to link the border of Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh via Agra, Fatehabad and Baha, Jaitpur, Udimore and Etawah with rail line;

(b) if so, the progress made in laying this rail line so far; and

(c) the steps being taken by the Government to expedite the completion of this rail line and the reasons for delay in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) This is not an approved work.

(c) Does not arise.

[English]

Recovery of Dues by MTNL

969. SHRI JAI PRAKASH (Hardoi) : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the attention of the Government have been drawn to the news item captioned "MTNL is going slow on recovery of dues" appearing in the Times of India dated February 7, 1997;

(b) if so, the facts thereof;

(c) whether Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Limited purchased an obsolete technology - "PDH" when the world over SDH is being bought;

(d) whether the MTNL also purchased/procured costly equipment far in excess of the requirements and a major part of those are lying unused;

(e) if so, the action taken against the officials responsible therefor; and

(f) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The facts are given in the Statement enclosed.

(c) PDH technology is not obsolete.

(d) No, Sir.

(e) and (f). Question does not arise in view of (c) and (d) above.

STATEMENT

The facts are as follows :

MTNL placed orders for 234 nos. of 140 Mbps and 4 nos. of 565 Mbps OFC equipment on nine different vendors based on an open tender during the period May to October, 1994. Since there was one tender for

OFC equipment also floated around the same time by DOT, while placing POs by MTNL on its tender the provisional rates were offered with the special condition that in case prices fixed by DOT for "exactly similar configuration" equipment are lower, same shall be applicable against MTNL POs. This extra clause was incorporated to safe-guard the interest of MTNL. The DOT fixed-prices were 30 to 40 percent lower than the MTNL's provisional rates and the major price difference was due to one particular item, namely, DDF. Based on the rates fixed by DOT, MTNL regulated the payment to the suppliers from time to time and fixed prices against provisional rates in September, 1995. The suppliers challenged the price fixation by MTNL as according to them, the equipment ordered by MTNL and DOT were not identical. It may however, be mentioned here that DOT did not get supply of this item at all from any of its approved suppliers and ultimately cancelled the orders and invoked the performance bank guarantees of the erring supplier. MTNL took legal advice from Additional Solicitor General of India, acted immediately thereafter and ordered due recoveries. In the process MTNL ordered invocation of Bank Guarantees furnished by the concerned suppliers and same has been challenged by the suppliers in the Court. The recovery amount comes to Rs. 2.46 crores only and not Rs. 9 crores as raised in the press clippings.

2. The suppliers have, however, contested the price fixation by MTNL and one of the suppliers has sought for arbitration. Indian Council of Arbitration (ICAR) has already nominated two former Chief Justices of India as Arbitrators and arbitration proceedings are to commence shortly.

Satellite Channel

970. SHRI RUPCHAND PAL : Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government propose to regulate the Satellite Channels including Direct to Home Service;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the time by which it is likely to be started?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION AND MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM) : (a) to (c). A broadcasting Bill is proposed to be introduced in the current session of Parliament for effective regulation of the Satellite Channels including Direct-to-Home Services.

I.T.D.C. Hotels/Motels in Karnataka

971. SHRI S.D.N.R. WADIYAR : Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state :

(a) the total number of I.T.D.C. Hotels and Motels in Karnataka;

(b) the details of I.T.D.C. Hotels in Bangalore and Mysore Cities;